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## VERGIL'S APPRENTICESHIP. I

BY TENNEY FRANK

There are poets who have chosen to sever themselves from the accidents and vicissitudes of their own time in order to interpret the human experiences of universal validity; there are others of equal power who, more responsive to the immediate appeals of their fellow-men, have preferred to give voice to the ideals of the age in which they lived. To this group Vergil belonged, for though his epic was staged in the dark ages of early Italy his characters look forward to and speak the language of the Augustan age. To comprehend such a poet adequately a sound knowledge of the poet's own time is essential, and above all an intimate acquaintance with his experiences, reading, and daily associations. Unfortunately we have now but miserable remnants of Suetonius' biography, and indeed we suspect that the original, like so much of that gossipy narrator's work, wasted too many pages on trivial detail. Even the shreds that survive are largely based upon conjectures drawn from the *Bucolics*, which, though in some slight measure autobiographical, are nevertheless too permeated with poetic symbolism and fanciful invention to be of service as a matter-of-fact source book.

There exists, however, a group of poems usually printed under the name of *Vergiliiana*, many of which speak with unusual candor of incidents in their author's life, and critics are now growing ever more confident that most of these are actually compositions of Vergil's youth. It is my purpose in the following pages to show that most of the doubt which still persists regarding their authenticity is misplaced, and that the time has come when we may confidently make use of them in tracing the growth of Vergil's powers.

### THE "CULEX"

Everyone will remember the *faenerator Alfius* of Horace's epode who was all but persuaded to become a farmer. I think it has not been pointed out that the verses which so nearly converted him

were no other than the pastoral scene in the *Culex*, or let us say at once *Vergil's Culex*. The parallelism in imagery and ideas between the *Culex* 40–160 and Horace, *Epoche* 2, is too striking to be accounted for by mere similarity of subject-matter. Since composite scenes provide the best criteria for judging interdependence I would first call attention to the similarities in a few of these. The first passage is *Culex* 148–58 (Vollmer's edition):

His suberat gelidis *manans e fontibus* unda  
quae levibus placidum rivi sonat orsa liquorem  
et quaqua geminas *avium vox* obstrepit auris. . . .  
Pastor ut ad fontem densa requievit in umbra  
mitem concepit projectus membra *soporem*.

In the second epode, 26–28, it is also the song of birds and the sound of flowing water that induce sleep:

Queruntur in silvis aves  
Fontesque<sup>1</sup> lympnis obstrepunt manantibus  
Somnos quod invitet leves.

The association of Priapus and Silvanus in *Epoche* 21–22,

Qua muneretur te, Priape, et te pater  
Silvane,

echoes *Culex* 86–87:

Illi *falce deus* colitur non arte politus  
ille colit lucos.

Similarly compare *Epoche* 11–12:

*in reducta valle* mugientium  
prospectat *errantes greges*

with *Culex* 49:

jam *vallibus* abdunt  
corpora jamque omni celeres e parte *vagantes*.

Other simpler pictures that appear in both poems are very numerous. I shall append a few, giving those of Horace first, since they are doubtless the more familiar:

<sup>1</sup> Markland's emendation to *frondes*, which is generally accepted, seems thus to be disproved by the *fontibus* of *Culex* l. 40. The reference to the *Culex* also explains why Horace's farmer happened to go to sleep in the middle of the poem. Horace omitted the frogs and cicadas of *Culex* 151–55 as irrelevant to his purpose, but his *queruntur*, l. 26, is reminiscent of *querulae*, *Culex* 151. On the meaning of these words see *Amer. Jour. of Philol.*, 1913, p. 322.

qui procul negotiis, solutus omne faenore [E. 1].  
 otiaque invidia degentem et fraude remota [C. 73].  
 neque excitatur classico miles truci  
 neque horret iratum mare [E. 5-6].  
 nec tristia bella  
 nec funesta timet validae certamina classis [C. 81-82].  
 vitium propagine, altas maritat populos [E. 9].  
 (hederae) ascendunt ad summa cacumina (populi) [C. 143].  
 Libet jacere . . . . in tenaci gramine [E. 24].  
 Saepe super tenero prosternit gramine corpus [C. 69].  
 Curas . . . . haec inter obliviscitur [E. 38].  
 incognita curis  
 quae lacerant . . . . mentes [C. 61].  
 laetum pecus, distenta siccet ubera [E. 46].  
 illi sunt gratae rorantes lacte capellae [C. 76].

Indeed there can be little doubt that Horace in his epode not only expressed his amusement at the business man's backsliding but also intended to compliment Vergil on the persuasive powers of his verse. The very position of the epode in the second place after the introductory tribute to Maecenas reveals the poet's purpose in honoring his friend.<sup>1</sup> We might also suggest that this epode was one of Horace's earliest, since he would probably have chosen one of the eclogues for comment had these been published. It should therefore be dated soon after Horace's return from the disaster at Philippi and be considered the first record we have of the acquaintance between the two poets. But our main business now is with the *Culex*, and the first point of interest established by the comparison is that the *Culex* existed and was being read at least before the epodes were published.

I shall disregard what was till recently the orthodox view, held and supported by Leo and Buecheler,<sup>2</sup> that the *Culex* was a post-Vergilian forgery or supposititious work. Skutsch was at least willing to admit that the internal evidence, which he carefully reviewed, favored the epoch of Vergil's youth, whoever the author

<sup>1</sup> In the collection of Odes Vergil again comes in for early attention, his *proplempicon* being placed immediately after the poems honoring Maecenas and Augustus.

<sup>2</sup> Leo's edition, also *Hermes*, 1902, p. 73; Buecheler, *Rhein. Mus.*, XLV, 324.

might be,<sup>1</sup> and Vollmer, on the basis of the testimony of Roman authors and of the text tradition, accepted the poem as Vergil's, though he erroneously held it to be a parody.<sup>2</sup> I shall here attempt to date its composition and to explain its purpose in the hope that the long discussion is now near its goal.

First, assuming that the poem is, as Lucan, Statius, Martial, and Suetonius believed, a poem by Vergil addressed to Octavius, let us attempt to find its date. The *Vita* of Donatus says of Vergil: "item fecit Cirim, et Culicem cum esset annorum XVI." This date, 54 B.C., cannot be correct, for Octavius was then too young (nine years) and too insignificant to be addressed at all, while Vergil had not reached Rome and could hardly know of the child's existence. Vollmer proposes to read XXVI instead of XVI, his reasons being that Octavius at the age of nineteen would be a more suitable subject of honor, and that Statius (as he believes) supports that date. In *Silvae* ii. 7. 73 Statius in honoring Lucan says: "haec (Pharsalia) primo juvenis canes sub aevo, ante annos Culicis Maroni"; and Lucan seems to have busied himself with the Pharsalia between the ages of twenty and twenty-six. Vollmer's suggestion is open to several objections: Statius says only that Lucan was engaged in composing at an earlier age than Vergil, not that he had fully completed his work; both Statius and Lucan considered the *Culex* as Vergil's first work, whereas we now date several poems earlier than 44 B.C.; the word *puer* in the dedication of the *Culex* is not a natural designation for a youth of nineteen years;<sup>3</sup> Vergil should have revealed better powers at the age of twenty-six than appear in the *Culex*, and, as we shall see, the *Culex* was composed for a schoolboy, not for a young man already in the army.

I should therefore propose a simpler emendation than Vollmer's and emend XVI to XXI, not to XXVI, dating the *Culex* in the year 48 B.C. This would make the poet twenty-one years of age and Octavius fourteen to fifteen, which fits the requirements of the

<sup>1</sup> *Aus Vergil's Frühzeit*, 1901, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Vollmer, *Sitz. Bayer. Akad.*, 1907, p. 353. Warde Fowler, *Class. Rev.*, 1914, p. 117, accepts the poem as Vergil's, dating it in 48 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> Cicero *Phil.* 4. 3 is hardly a parallel, since the orator is urged by very strong motives to emphasize Octavius' youth. According to Nicolaus Damascenus, Octavius resented these references to his age in 44.

dedication quite appositely. Octavius was a boy of very ordinary hopes before 50, when Caesar seemed to be on the verge of a defeat at the hands of the Senate, but after Caesar's amazing victories of 49 and 48, which made him the unquestioned master of the Roman world, his nearest male heir became a marked person. Soon after Pharsalia, Caesar centered attention on the lad by directing that he assume the *toga virilis* and particularly by asking the people to elect him a pontifex at an age unthought of before. And this is the period to which we should assign the poem. The words of the dedication which have seemed so inexplicable to critics, *Octavi venerande*<sup>1</sup> and *sancte puer*, can only be explained on the supposition that the priesthood had just been conferred upon him. It is a direct reference to the unusual and sacred office bestowed in October, 48, and it was doubtless written while this honor was still fresh in mind and before the more remarkable civil honors were bestowed upon him in the following years. In this respect the language of the dedication reminds us of the solemn tone of Tibullus' address to Messalinus when the latter had received the honors of a minor priesthood (ii. 5). We can hardly refuse to accept a date which so thoroughly accords with all the requirements of the known facts.<sup>2</sup>

We must now try to comprehend the purpose of the poem, for if it is to be taken seriously as an epyllion on a peculiarly unfortunate gnat we can only wonder with the orthodox critics how a man of Vergil's good taste could ever have been so young as to have perpetrated it. Vollmer, who is driven by the evidence of the text tradition to acknowledge Vergil as the author, takes refuge in the supposition that it is a parody, though the humor is "so delicate as to be difficult to find."<sup>3</sup> He claims that the words of Statius' preface indicate this by mentioning the *Culex* in the same breath

<sup>1</sup> Should not l. 25 read: "Octavi venerande meis *adludere coeptis*"? Cf. ll. 26 and 36.

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, Vergil was already in his twenty-second year by three days before Octavius assumed the *toga virilis* on October 18 of 48, but the Romans counted the years by consulships, and later historians would reckon events of *Caesare II Servilio consulibus* in Vergil's twenty-first year, since his birthday fell in the latter half of the year. For the evidence regarding Octavius' youth see Gardthausen, *Augustus*. Livy Per. 119 says: "(Octavius) cum annos novemdecim haberet, consul creatus est." This was on August 19, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Vollmer, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

as the *Batrachomachia*. The passage reads: "Sed et Culicem legimus et Batrachomachiam etiam agnoscimus nec quisquam est illustrium poetarum qui non aliquid operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit." But Vollmer seems to miss the point. Statius merely asks pardon for writing the *Silvae stilo remissiore* even as great poets wrote trifles in their youth. He is not implying that the *Culex* or the *Silvae* are of a certain *genre*. When Vergil wrote a parody, as he did in the tenth *Catalepton*, the point is apparent in every line even without a reference to the thing parodied. The *Culex* is obviously not that kind of a composition.

Had Vergil meant to parody heroic style he would not have employed the subdued language which he himself characterizes as the "plain style" (l. 35):

mollia sed tenui pede currere carmina.<sup>1</sup>

The poem does not exaggerate the chief characteristics of the epyllia. It has no more digressions than the *Peleus and Thetis* of Catullus, its allusions are no more obscure, it is less sentimental, and it has fewer of the marked neoteric cadences. Again, Vergil would not have expressed his wishes for Octavius' future by hoping that he too (*et tibi*, 39–40) might enjoy the blessed abodes mentioned in the poem and the safety secured by the shepherd, if the shepherd and the Elysium were a joke. Nor would Horace have taken the pastoral scene out of this poem for serious purposes if it had been intended as a parody. The subject alone is beneath the dignity of a serious poem, and that can be explained by a more plausible hypothesis.

The author has himself said something about his purpose in the first few lines, but the text is unfortunately so corrupt that we cannot be sure what they mean. Leo, who always attempts to retain the manuscript reading, is forced to emend here, and he only succeeds in making the author say that his song is due to the gnats which kept him awake at night! That is obviously not a clue to follow. The lines in question as given in the best manuscripts are (3–5):

lusimus haec propter culicis sint carmina docta  
omnis et historiae per ludum consonet ordo  
notitia eque ducum voces licet invidus adsit.

<sup>1</sup> See Jackson, *Harvard Studies*, XXV, 117, for the meaning of these terms.

I think that we must with Ellis emend the last line to read *notitiae doctumque voces* to get any possible meaning into the passage. *Ducum voces* might possibly be conceived to mean "the diction of heroic verse," but, as we have already seen, the author presently claims to be writing in the "plain style," not in the epic (l. 35). With another slight change of *et* to *ut*, also adopted by Ellis, a readable and consistent text is secured:

Lusimus: haec propter culicis sint carmina docta  
omnis ut historiae per ludum consonet ordo  
notitiae, doctumque voces licet invidus adsit.

"These are but trifles; yet my verses on the culex shall be filled with learning so that [*haec propter . . . ut*] knowledge in all its range [*omnis ordo notitiae*] may ring through the playful form of a story [*per ludum historiae*], and you may call it learned whatever the critic may say." If this is the meaning Vergil claims only to have sugar-coated the pill of learning, to have strung a series of "useful facts" on a story which he considers attractive to the schoolboy. Fortunately there is a striking confirmation in Martial that the poem was so understood, and Martial gives the only judgment of ancient times regarding the nature of the poem. In Book xiv, the *Apophoreta*, No. 185, he writes this couplet as suitable to be inscribed in a copy of Vergil's *Culex* when given as a present:

Accipe facundi Culicem, *studiose*, Maronis  
*Ne nucibus positis Arma Virumque legas.*

Evidently he considers it a book suitable for a schoolboy and one at that which could be read at recess time. This explains at once the strange combination of a child's fable with solid blocks of erudition. The slight story tells of a shepherd who was wakened from his noonday siesta by the sting of a philanthropic gnat just in time to escape death from a monstrous serpent. The shepherd acting on the first impulse crushed the gnat and was in time duly rebuked for his innocent ingratitude. The simplicity of the tale, the moralizing tone, and the personalizing and exaggeration in animal physiology and psychology reveal of course that Vergil drew it from the usual stock of fable-lore. He may himself have added the return of the gnat's ghost from Hades in order to make occasion for his census of the lower world. The *omnis ordo notitiae* occupies of

course the major portion of the poem. Not to mention the abstruse allusions of the introductory portions, it contains the descriptive eulogy of pastoral life (58–97), then a catalogue of the plants that grew about the shepherd's resting-place, with an appropriate reference to the metamorphosis myth, or the proper use of each (the plane tree, lotus, poplar, almond, oak, pine, ilex, cypress, beech, ivy, and myrtle). This list reminds us of Alexandrian botanical books as well as of the mythographs that schoolmasters used in explaining allusions in Greek poetry. The description of the serpent that follows (163–82) may come from an early bestiary such as the romancing Alexandrians made up when the Ptolemies began to gather Eastern animals into their museums. In making a boy's story interesting there was no reason why the author should have searched for a civilized domestic variety, and this explains the lurid dress and the musical qualities of the animal. Of real parody there is nothing. Then follows the *pièce de résistance* of mythologic lore, a full catalogue of famous personages that were supposed to inhabit the two several compartments of the lower world (216–375), a kind of prompter to poetic allusions in the field that occupied very much of the time of every *grammaticus* in the elucidation of school texts. Since the characters of ancient tragedy and epic verse had all passed to the lower regions, this device made it possible to mention a great number *en masse*. There is no need to report the wearisome list, but it is evident that the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice is told at some length, apparently on the theory of Lucretius that the doctor should sweeten the cup of paregoric for children with a touch of honey on the rim. In order to include references to Homeric deeds, otherwise difficult to incorporate in a catalogue of personages, the author also allows himself digressions into narratives when he reaches the names of Achilles, Ulysses, and Agamemnon. Finally the more famous personages of Roman history are mentioned for readers of Ennius.<sup>1</sup> When now the shepherd has recovered from his scientific nightmare he duly entombs the culex and plants over the grave an instructive list of flowers and shrubs: acanthus, roses, violets, myrtle, hyacinth, crocus, laurel, oleander,

<sup>1</sup> Is l. 368 a reference to some family tradition of Cicero's friend *Flamininus Flamina?* See *Ad Att.* xiv. 16. 4.

lilies, rosemary, savin, marigold, ivy, bacchus, amaranth, bumastus, pieris, and narcissus, a list sufficient to teach the boy more than the lesson of gratitude.

Vergil seems therefore to have combined in the *Culex* a number of elements that were to be found in Alexandrian "catalogue" works, a *genre* that attracted readers not only because of the associational appeal but also because such books served as prompters<sup>1</sup> to memory, especially in Alexandria and Rome, where the exotic Greek lore was not naturally acquired from childhood. Then to suit the immediate taste of the pupils who must acquire such lore from the painful exegesis of the schoolmaster Vergil chose as a binding thread a simple story of the type that Romans thought suitable for the very young.<sup>2</sup>

Since then we have found that the dedication of the *Culex* and the testimony of Donatus favor the year 48, that Horace uses the poem in an early epode and implies Vergilian authorship by the position he gives it, and that the contents are best explained on the same assumption, we have no longer any reason for questioning the very strong testimony of the text tradition and of the intelligent Romans who referred to the poem.<sup>3</sup>

Finally Horace's use of the poem gives us proof that the *Culex* was actually issued as a separate *libellus*, at least to a small circle;

<sup>1</sup> Textbooks written for and dedicated to boys and young men at school were numerous at Rome; cf. especially Norden, *Hermes*, 1905, pp. 481 ff.

<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible that Vergil had met Octavius at school, as the much-abused Bern *Vita* says. Though Octavius was seven years younger than Vergil he may have attended the lectures of Epidius in the year 50, when he delivered the *laudatio funebris* over his grandmother. Vergil coming from the provinces probably continued his rhetorical studies at Rome even beyond the year 50, and he apparently had a sufficient competence to secure the services of an Epidius, since he found it possible to study philosophy with Siro.

<sup>3</sup> Does not Vergil himself allude directly to the *Culex* in the first two lines of the sixth *Eclogue*?

"Prima Syracusio dignata est ludere versu  
Nostra neque erubuit silvas habitare Thalia."

Thalia, the muse of country life, was the muse he invoked in the *Culex*:

"Lusimus, Octavi, gracili modulante Thalia,"

and, like Horace, Vergil probably considered the pastoral scene as the most successful part of it.

In the *Ciris* also, which I place at about 45–43, he seems to allude to *Culex* 35: ("mollia sed tenui pede carmina") when he says (*Ciris* 20): "quamvis interdum ludere nobis et gracilem molli liceat pede claudere versum."

and this explains why Vergil treated it in his later works with more consideration than he did the *Ciris*, which was apparently suppressed. He does indeed employ ideas and pictures from it;<sup>1</sup> he fortunately elaborated the pastoral scene and the Orpheus tale in the *Georgics*, and did not hesitate to recur again to the subject of the lower world, but he quite studiously avoids using any complete line from it, and the sixth *Aeneid* rather avoids than invites a comparison. The book, unworthy though he considered it later, was apparently accessible to the public and beyond recall.

#### VERGIL AND HORACE

We have seen that Horace's second epode is in no small measure a favorable comment upon the pastoral scene in the *Culex*. This fact of course necessitates an examination of the time-honored theory that the epode borrowed its imagery from the rural scene of *Georgics* ii. 458–542: *O fortunatos nimium*. We shall find that the lines in the *Georgics* are later than the epode and are in fact Vergil's return of the compliment which Horace had so graciously paid his early effort. The magnificent hymn is of course much more; it is a striking statement of Vergil's ideals and aspirations, employing for the purpose the central idea of the pastoral lines of the *Culex* but with unmeasured increase of power; it also contains his generous tribute to the poet who above all others inspired him throughout life. But for these very reasons it was fitting that here he should leave a delicate token of his gratitude to Horace, who had been quick to recognize his early effort.

I need not dwell long upon the similarities, since most of the erudite editions (cf. Kiessling's), though mistaken regarding the order of precedence, give all the certain parallels. A few of the more complex ones may be mentioned; thus Horace's opening lines suggest Vergil's closing ones:

Ut prisca gens mortalium . . . neque excitatur classico [H. 2–5].

Aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat

Needum etiam audierant inflari classica [G. ii. 538–39].

I doubt whether Vergil would have thus closed in the minor key after the major notes of the preceding line if he had not intended to refer to Horace's opening.

<sup>1</sup> See Jackson, *Class. Quart.*, 1911, p. 163.

Almost all the details of the homely scene in Horace 39–47,  
 pudica mulier . . . . dulcis liberos . . . . laetum pecus . . . .  
 distenta ubera . . . . vina promens,

recur in chiastic succession in Vergil 524–29:

dulces nati . . . . casta pudicitiam domus . . . . ubera lactea . . . .  
 luctantur haedi . . . . cratera coronant.

That Vergil is here the successor is especially evident in lines 516–21. Horace, who was writing a concise poem that must disclose its plan, organized his impressions in succession under summer (9–16), autumn (17–28), and winter (29–34). Vergil, who at the end of his long hymn was bent only on selecting some recognizable images from his friend's poem, disregarded this logical order in lines 516–21, so that autumn scenes from Horace are used both before and after the winter scene. Again an illuminating comparison may be made between Horace 7–8,

*Forumque vitat et superba civium  
 potentiorum limina,*

and Vergil 502–5,

(nec) insanumque *forum* aut populi tabularia vidit;  
 sollicitant alii remis freta caeca, ruuntque  
 in ferrum, penetrant aulas et *limina regum*.

Here the clear consistency of Horace, which proves it the original, gives way in Vergil to a rather labored effort at making a place for the second idea (*limina regum*). Indeed, Vergil's line was frequently misunderstood until a reference to Horace explained its meaning. We may then accept the order *Culex-Epoche 2-Georgics* ii, and recognize Vergil's effort at publicly acknowledging Horace's tribute to the *Culex*.

A confirmation of our early dating of the epode may perhaps be found in Vergil *Eclogue* ii. 66,

Aspice, aratra jugo referunt suspensa juvenci,

which seems to be an even earlier reference to the epode; compare  
 videre fessos vomerem inversum boves  
 collo trahentis languido [H. 63–64].

Since this is one of the earlier eclogues its evidence so far as it goes favors a date prior to 40 b.c. for the epode. That as we know was the year in which Vergil wrote his fourth *Eclogue* in answer to Horace's dirge over the lost republic, *Epoche* 16.

## VERGIL'S EULOGY OF MESSALLA, "CATALEPTON" ix

The ninth *Catalepton* is a prosaic if enthusiastic tribute to Messalla, which few critics have dared assign to Vergil. Even Birt,<sup>1</sup> who believes that Varius and Tucca accepted all of the *Catalepton* as Vergilian, rejects the ninth, preferring to believe that Vergil's own best friends were imposed upon in this one instance. Vollmer<sup>2</sup> stands almost alone in its defense. He is of course compelled to this opinion by his faith in the text tradition, and it appears that his faith will again be justified. However, by assigning the poem to the year 27, Vergil's forty-third year, he has so weakened his case that skepticism continues unabated. Is it possible that Vergil could write in a manner so stilted and futile at a time when he was composing the second book of the *Aeneid*? If the poem was addressed to Messalla on the occasion of the Aquitanian triumph, why has it no specific reference to Messalla's many victories in half a dozen notable campaigns? If written to the distinguished general and statesman, why is half of the eulogy devoted to the praise of trivial Greek verse-studies, which Tibullus in all his panegyrics does not even mention? These objections are so serious that we must either find another date for the poem or call it spurious.

It is my belief that Vergil wrote this poem in the autumn of 42 B.C., when he had just heard of the first battle of Philippi, a battle which Messalla recorded in his memoirs<sup>3</sup> as a victory because he succeeded in capturing Octavius' camp. It was of course three weeks before the decisive second battle which proved so disastrous to the republican cause.

A brief review of Messalla's early career will aid in justifying this date. Cicero<sup>4</sup> happens to mention that Messalla went to Athens to study in the year 45. He was then about nineteen years of age. Soon after Caesar's murder he returned to Italy, visiting Cicero and bringing him greetings from his son, who was still at

<sup>1</sup> *Jugendverse und Heimatpoesie Vergils*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *Sitz. Bayer. Akad.*, 1907, p. 346. In a note he pronounces the style not un-Vergilian. Ellis was also inclined to accept the poem; *Professor Birt's Ed. of The Catal.*, Oxford, 1910; also Jahn, *Burs. Jahresb.*, 1910, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Plut. Brut.* 40-47.

<sup>4</sup> *Ad. Att.* xii. 32; cf. *Prosop. Imp. Rom.* iii. 363. Vergil may have met Messalla in the lecture-rooms at Naples, since the *Ciris* implies some years of common interest in philosophy.

Athens (*Ad. Att.* xv. 17. 2). A year later, when Rome heard of the debacle at Mutina and began to fear that Octavius and Antony would unite against the Senate, Messalla set out to join Brutus and Cassius. On this occasion Cicero gave him an important letter to carry to Brutus,<sup>1</sup> in which Cicero took the opportunity to bestow upon the bearer exceedingly high praise for his learning and oratorical ability, as well as for his probity, patriotism, and good sense. During the next year he served with Brutus and Cassius in the East, probably accompanying Brutus through Thrace to Asia, then joining Cassius, who conquered Cilicia and Cappadocia, captured Rhodes in a naval battle, and marched over Asia Minor on the way back to Macedonia. At the first battle of Philippi Cassius gave Messalla his best troops, and Augustus later acknowledged that he had been his strongest foe in that engagement (*Plut. Brut.* 53). After the defeat, some three weeks later, Messalla, though but twenty-two years of age, was chosen commander. He advised capitulation, and his advice was taken. He then went with Antony to Egypt but returned to Rome later and was engaged by Augustus in his wars in Sicily (36), Pannonia (35), among the Salassi (34?), at Actium in the year of his consulship (31), and in Aquitania (29–27), whence he returned in triumph in 27.

Let us now see how the lines of the poem fit the setting of the year 42:

Line 3:

Victor adest, magni magnum decus ecce triumphi,  
victor qua terrae quaque patent maria.

After the first battle of Philippi, Messalla rightly called himself victorious because of his successful attack upon Octavius' camp; he had also associated for a year with Brutus and Cassius in the conquest of the East, the seas as well as the provinces. He could therefore be appropriately called the *magnum decus* of Brutus' expected triumph.

Line 5:

Barbaricae portans insignia pugnae.

Since Brutus and Cassius had engaged numerous Thracian and Asiatic tribes the poet obviously preferred to dwell upon these facts rather than upon the struggle of civil arms at Philippi.

<sup>1</sup> We still have this letter; it is *Ad. Brut.* i. 15.

Lines 7–40: This passage, comprising half of the poem, is devoted to praise of Messalla's Greek bucolics. Since Tibullus, who frequently lauds Messalla between the years 30 and 20 B.C., never mentions these poems, they were probably exercises of the Athenian days which the author was glad to forget in the time of his greatness. If, however, the eulogy was written in 42, these lines give us an important landmark in Vergilian biography. In line 13 Vergil apparently says that he is engaged in translating Messalla's bucolics, and he even gives the very setting of Messalla's poems:

molliter hic viridi *patulae sub tegmine quercus*  
Moeris pastores et Meliboeus erant.

Now when Vergil adopts the same setting in the opening line of his first *Eclogue*,

*Tityre tu patulae sub tegmine fagi,*

what does he intend the reader to understand unless it be that Messalla is his inspiration and guide? There can be little doubt that the ninth *Catalepton* was written before the first *Eclogue*, just as little that the eclogues contained other lines taken from Messalla's verses, and that this is implied in Vergil's words: "pauca tua in nostras venerunt carmina chartas" (l. 13).

Line 40:

*Praemia Messalis maxima Poplicolis.*

This line is used as a bridge from the praise of Messalla's poetry to the eulogy of his deeds of war, the transition being carried out as follows: The heroine of your verses will enjoy a more lasting fame than Helen, etc., and Lucretia, on whose account Rome expelled the kings and elected consuls, giving great reward to Messalla Publicola. If this labored passage has any excuse it must lie in some appropriate comparison between the ancient Valerius Publicola and our Valerius Messalla. If the eulogy was written in 42 there was propriety in such a comparison, but not otherwise. The poet means to say that as in 509 B.C. Valerius Publicola aided the first Brutus in establishing popular rule, so now young Messalla was aiding the last Brutus in the struggle to re-establish it. Critics have stumbled over the fact that Messalla never bore the cognomen *Publicola*, but in 42, when for some days the republic seemed possible, it must have occurred to many that Messalla as a champion of

the republic might be given the old Valerian cognomen of Publicola, even though there was some doubt about the line of descent. But after Messalla's submission and return, as Muenzer, *De gente Valeria*, citing Pliny *N. H.* 35. 8,<sup>1</sup> has shown, Messalla made every effort to distinguish between his ancestors and the Publicola-Laevinus branch. In fact, there is a reference to this in Horace, who in *Sat.* i. 6 (before 33 B.C.), while praising Messalla in line 42, ridicules the decadent "Laevinum, Valeri genus, unde superbus Tarquinius regno pulsus fugit" (l. 12). This seems to me to be definite proof that the eulogy was written in the year 42, and that it could not have been written after the collapse of the republican party.

Lines 43–50: These lines speak in very general terms of Messalla's campaigns: You have left the forum, the city, and your son for the camp, endured cold and heat, stormy seas, and the onset of battle. These generalities are quite appropriate for the Eastern campaigns of 43–42, the details of which, to judge from Cicero's last letters,<sup>2</sup> were none too well known at Rome. Vergil furthermore would hardly care to stress them, since they chiefly concerned attacks upon well-known Greek cities within the Empire.

Line 44: "Tam procul hoc gnato." We do not know when this son, Messalinus, was born, but since he was *XVvir* in or before 19 B.C. (*Tibullus* ii. 5) it is generally assumed that he was born at least as early as 42. This assumption is the more necessary since Messalla was absent from Rome for some years after 42, and it is difficult to account for a son of the years indicated by Messalinus' career, unless his father was married before his departure in 43.

Lines 51–54:

Nunc celeres Afros, perjurae milia gentis  
Aurea nunc rapidi flumina adire Tagi, etc.

These mysterious lines have puzzled all readers, for Messalla is not known to have gone to Africa, Spain, or Britain at any time of his life. Birt is probably correct in supposing that the poet is imagining impending campaigns which his hero may be called upon to conduct. If that be the case the lines can hardly belong to a later period, for a poet could then refer to many actual achievements without resorting to prospective ones. Since we can date

<sup>1</sup> "Laevinorum alienam imaginem genti suae inseri prohibuit."

<sup>2</sup> For example, *Ad Fam.* xii. 9.

the poem in the year 42 the explanation is quite simple. Vergil, assuming a victory at Philippi, foresaw that Africa and the West were still to be conquered, and he complimented Messalla by accepting as a matter of course that he would be chosen for the task.

Lines 59–63:

Nos ea quae tecum finxerunt carmina divi,  
Cynthus et Musae, Bacchus et Aglaie,  
Si laude aspirare, humilis si adire Cyrenas,  
Si patrio Graios carmine adire sales  
Possumus, optatis plus jam procedimus ipsis.

The text and punctuation in these lines are doubtful, but if I understand them rightly the poet means to say that he will be quite satisfied if he can bring some honor to Messalla's poetry, and if he can himself attain the modest success of a Callimachus (*adire Cyrenas*). The first wish seems to refer to the translations of the bucolics mentioned above, and the phrase *adire Cyrenas* is evidently a reference to another poem also intended for Messalla, the *Ciris*, which indeed is the best illustration in Latin of some of the traits of the Callimachian epyllion. I shall later attempt to date the *Ciris* in 45–43. These lines accordingly prove like all the rest to fit into the circumstances of the year 42; they have little meaning if assigned to the period of Vergil's great work.

This review seems to show that the ninth *Catalepton* was written to Messalla after the report of his victory at Philippi had reached Rome, but before the news of the second battle had arrived. That the author was Vergil can in the circumstances hardly be doubted. The trifling stylistic objections raised by Buecheler (*Rhein. Mus.*, 38, 515) have been adequately answered by Vollmer, who rightly insists that the ancient and textual testimony in favor of Vergil is too strong to be questioned except on the best of grounds. We have seen that by dating the poem in the year 42 B.C. this testimony has the support of the contents and historical setting as well. Why the poem was not published by Vergil we can now understand. There was no triumph, and though Vergil and Messalla continued to be friends they probably avoided the subject of the civil war and its shattered hopes for the best of reasons. And so the paean was left unsung.